

Chaperoning at the 1936 Winter Olympics

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In the winter of 1936 Louise Bertram and Stewart Raeborn of the Toronto Skating Club attended the Winter Olympics held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen as champion pair skaters of Canada. I was chosen as their pair skater's chaperon. How lucky can I get--who happen to be chosen for that job. There were other little things I had to do, like to be sure that they ate well, slept well and were in fine shape for the Games.

January 15, 1936:

We were now aboard the S.S. Washington and their captain Shyler Cummings was in charge. He was a most capable person and had much experience (Tenders out to receive tons of mail and baggage. SS Washington carried 30,000 bags Atlantic record at Xmas time. Also on board the ship: Mr. and Mrs. Rachmaninoff, La Argentina, Lillian Gish, Prince of Mongolia, American Olympic team members: Lu Blanchard, George Bellows, Erle Reiter, Marchel Y. Vinson). The clouds wept as we left New York though we thought there would be no-one left on board, and the vast throng left.

We saw Lillian Gish being photographed in a Chinese looking, plum coloured suit. She looked thoroughly seedy but, had not lost her girlish figure. After unpacking and arranging our gorgeous flowers, we made our way to the dining room and had our table with a French woman. Later in the afternoon, the Eaton Buyers on board, invited us to their table and we thus formed the Diamond E. Eaton Club. They all seemed very nice, and aided us

in every way. Our bell hop is adorable and our stewardess looked like Ruth Donnelly in the movies and I'm sure we'll be well taken care of.

I certainly needed the above mentioned care. I had my first real taste of sea sickness. All dressed up in velvet, being called for, and then suddenly dashing back for a key, really it was to the basin. Thus I was prone for a day making efforts at recovery in between.

[January 17:]

Friday provided ideal and sunny weather with games of ping-pong and a movie, "The Riddle of Monte Carlo," with Warren William in that more successful than the day before. When the rug slipped in a hole in the auditorium and spilled fifty people in a heap. That's what rolling at sea does. Dinner is an evening entertainment, until nine, then Bingo, which I kept away from, but joined in dancing in a big way. The Cafe is much like a Night Club and the orchestra which seemed full of pep. Now that I had really gained my sea legs, I can think back more clearly.

We had one grand social ball starting after arriving to have a special dinner with the captain, and the American Olympic Team. The special programs looked attractive and we had seven courses, spent the afternoon on the bridge, saw all the inner workings of the ship. Pictures were taken and then about 4:30 it was, we dashed away to entertain Eaton Buyers, and Stewart to tea, which

was served in our room. Our flowers were still lovely. Later we went on to the captains Gala Dinner, another huge meal, and certainly did justice to it to. This was the night all passengers were having a great time, and a good time was had by all. The Cafe was much like a New York Night Club, with as much atmosphere as possible and then some.

[January 18:]

Next day was recovery day, when it took the whole day for the passengers to recover from the Gala Dinner. Movies in the afternoon, and Bingo at night. Did not dance so late this time so went to bed, to be awakened to catch roses and vases in the sea rolling.

[January 19:]

We surprised Mr. Smart by getting up early and having breakfast together. We saw them off at Cobb (Saw old Fort at Cobb but couldn't go exploring off the ship which stayed in harbour), deserted else where, and it was noticeably wet. I spent the morning in the swimming tank and read in the afternoon, and had an early supper with the Conn's and Adam's, and later saw them off at Plymouth. We felt quite widowed as we went to breakfast next morning.

[January 20:]

The Havre itself seemed a very quaint and poverty stricken

place. There were cobble roads, narrow streets, slanting houses and queer roofs all made at least looked as though they had come from a picture book. The people too were poverty stricken looking and the shops, more junky than quaint. Leaving after supper, we played Ping-Pong and then retired quite early to finish my book.

[January 21:]

After breakfast we write letters and played ping-pong, had shampoo and a wave and felt like a million the poorer. The afternoon was spent at a movie and after dinner we packed our bags and were inspected by imposing looking German officers who were most courteous and told us we could have brought in all the teas, cigarettes and coffee we desired. They just didn't open any of our bags.

[January 22:]

Arriving the next morning before dawn, we missed the flyer to Hamburg, it went a hundred miles per hour. So we had to wait in Hamburg, so took a walk about the town as dawn swept down upon us. We walked beside a mid-city lake, where steamers, like boats, whistled by. Everyone seemed to rush by in a brisk business like fashion, and all looked prosperous, contented, and with no time to waste. We were told that Hamburg is the third largest port in the world and you could easily believe it.

Cook's agent finally put us aboard a crowded train and we

shared it with a ship mate, Mr. Conroy a glove manufacturer and a german who spoke English well. He read the paper to us, and gave us interesting information. He was a former officer of the Death Head Hussar Regiment. His ring looked like a replica of my fraternity pin. He gave a few ideas on the German situation and pointed out the largest aviation school and broadcasting station on the way to Berlin. We heard of the origin of Leipzig and that all married German men wore wedding rings on their right hand, that might help us in the future.

Arriving at the Hotel Bristol we were met by some agents there and we saw that they had red carpets and huge walnut wardrobes in our room and white feather bed spread, plus dozens of pillows and pleasant, they were plain and fancy, and the lights, the lights were elusive, switches.

Steve and Louise were skating, so I went exploring with a city map, on foot. By Mr. Bolton's card I finally found the Eaton Buying Office, where I met a very nice English girl, and Mr. Rideal, the manager, and Gilbert Eaton the son of lady Eaton. I was invited to Rideal's house for supper and finally accepted. We were not hearing form the kids. The Rideal's had an attractive huge apartment with very high ceilings, and very spacious rooms. In the desert course of dinner we were interrupted by a blaring of the bugle. Lights were put out and we dashed across the road and into a cellar, where men in uniform showed us the way with lighted torches as we crept downstairs into the basement. It was a compulsory air raid drill. Rolls

were called and I with my mouth open said not one word. A lecture was given in air raid protection and a magazine distributed. I was too scared not to listen, but was told the lecture was interesting as well as instructive. Following this a practical demonstration was given in the apartment courts, lights were still out. An airplane zoomed over head just as they lighted a bomb section, which burned through metal, dropped in a pail of water and burned a hole through it. An example of a house fire was made, and three people dashed to put it out, they wore grey fire suits and gas masks and put it out in a few seconds with only half a pail of water and ordinary scrubbing mops. One of these efficient persons turned out to be an attractive young lady.

Returning to the apartment, we had coffee and I left hurriedly for the ice palace only to find difficulty at the gate with my English. And as I gathered a crowd, I heard someone yell "Bess" and to find the kids just coming out of the place where they were skating. Back at the hotel we ate sandwiches and drank coffee with Gilbert Eaton and then "so to bed." Cries of help came from the next room, when we found that Stewart Raeborn, who was about to take a bath before bed time had inadvertently turned the shower instead of the tub on or vice versa, and found himself soaking wet while he was fully dressed.

January 24, 1936:

Got up at ten o'clock to have a late breakfast and go exploring to a Berlin Bureau Mr. Ridell had recommended. They supplied a guard, nice looking and about twenty years old, who met us after lunch with Gilbert Eaton, who took us to the Lutter Kellor, a basement restaurant over 125 years old. The walls were covered with names, and beautiful antique murals, the windows in coloured glass were dated 1709, and the food was especially German with only Rhine wine served. Afterwards our guide came and picked us up at the hotel with a Nazi sports leader who took us to a German gymnastics class of Greta Uhler, a lovely blonde who taught the business and women's group of the Youth Movement. Her brother was now attending Neils Bukh school where I went in Denmark and her work was a mixture of Bukh and German, very interesting and done to music.

Returning to the Hotel, Cynthia Walker met us and we rushed on to the Sports Palace, where the men's singles were held. Schaeffer, and a young lad, and a Japanese were marvellous. The sports palace was in three balconies decorated with flags and red trim. A surprising note was in the crystal chandelier. The hockey team afterward was funny. A silent serious affair where no-one yelled. One team wore red and the other team, powder blue sweaters, and the referee blew a whistle. There were tables around the side and food was served as usual.

After meeting the German olympic leader in skating, we took an elevator, to the "Fatherland" and it was a most elaborate restaurant, divided into different restaurants representing

different countries and states. We ended in the Munich room, where we ate sausages. A Bavarian orchestra in leather shorts embroidered with fancy braces wore green hats with feathers. In the midst of it was a huge iron pole with a hoop at the end of it, where sausages were tied. Men climbed up and grabbed the sausages and slid down to much applause. They were allowed to lead the band if they were successful in doing this interesting stunt. A mountain scene at one end showed dusk approach and a storm come up followed by the dawn. The storm disappeared and the sunset was beautiful. It had very clever lighting. All the people were merry and sang with the German band. One German motto is "Strength through happiness," another "Relax to keep fit." And they surely practice what they preach. We visited several other rooms, like the Wild West American room, the Rhine room--and no-one got wet as the water poured down and William Tell's overture was played with much success, and accompanying light--a Ship room, Vesuvius room with the volcano disrupting, and the Turkish room, much like the Eaton Annex Coffee Shop. We taxied home very tired but, wouldn't have missed it for worlds. Nothing compared with this in New York.

[January 25:]

Rose early to go to the Sports Palace and saw Stew and Louise skate. Their sea legs had gone and they skated beautifully. Miss Bell from the Buying office met us then and took us both to a west end restaurant for lunch, it was called



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